

# Monitoring the Opt-Out Process

***The Opt-Out process is monitored by the Facility Privacy Officer in several different ways, including:***

**Observing the intake process.**

- Is patient or caregiver provided a full explanation of the Facility Directory with “real life” examples.
- Looking for evidence that the patient was offered an opportunity to opt-out and that they can change their mind.
- Evidence that the decision is entered into VistA

***Testing staff response.***

- Random phone calls to the telephone operators to see if they will connect a call to someone who has opted out.
- Contacting any employee to see if they would give out the room number of an opted out patient.
- Contacting nursing stations for information on an opted out patient.
- Checking the information desk about flowers to opted out patients.
- Observing what mail room employees do with on mail for opted out patients.
- Checking to see if any incapacitated patients were opted-in or out and documentation in medical records

The decision to Opt-Out of the facility directory can have a far reaching impact. It is important that the decision be made and documented properly.



**For additional information,  
contact**

**Your facility Privacy Officer  
Ext 4311 or  
[vhaphiprivacyofficer@va.gov](mailto:vhaphiprivacyofficer@va.gov)**

Department of Veterans Affairs

## Facility Directory Opt-Out For employees



**Corporal Michael  
J. Crescenz  
VAMC**

# Facility Opt-Out Directory

This brochure provides information for employees of this VAMC on the procedures associated the Opt-Out process for this facility and throughout the medical centers of the Veterans Health Administration.

## Opt-Out Defined

Individuals may request exclusion from the Facility Directory during each **inpatient** admission. This shall be in accordance with the Privacy Policy MCM 00-17

The facility Directory Opt-Out provision **does not apply to Emergency Rooms** unless the patient is going to be admitted to an inpatient setting.

**Note:** The facility Directory Opt-Out provision does not apply to Out-patient clinics as there is not a directory for these patients.



## So, how does it work?

1. Upon admission, VistA will automatically exclude each patient in the facility directory.
2. During the admission screening process, Admissions and Eligibility and/or AOD must ask each patient to specify if they wish to be excluded from the facility directory.



3. Decision **must be documented** in the VistA system at each admission. Patient must also sign the opt out form for scanning.
4. If the inpatient chooses not to be excluded, VistA should be edited using either the Admit a Patient or Extended Bed Control Options to indicate the patients preference.
5. Each patient must be advised that if they request to be excluded, medical center staff cannot provide any information to visitors or callers concerning whether he/she is an inpatient at the facility. This includes family, friends, colleagues, deliveries (flowers, cards or mail) or anyone asking about the patient.
6. If an inquiry is received concerning a patient who elects to opt-out of the facility directory, a sample response may be "I am sorry, but I do not have any information I can give you whether he or she is a patient."

## Incapacitated Patient

If the patient is incapacitated or unable to make the Opt-Out decision at the time of admission, the facility health care provider admitting the patient must make a determination on behalf of the patient for inclusion in the facility directory or to opt the patient out of the directory. Consider the following:



1. What has been the patients preference during previous admissions?
2. Is the patient accompanied by the next of kin, other family member, or by someone with a Power of Attorney, legal guardian that can speak on behalf of the patient?
3. The provider must document the decision on the opt out form
4. Should the patient become able to communicate or make the facility opt-out decision, the patient must be given the opportunity to do so.
5. The provider or social worker assigned shall present the opt-out question to the patient and then documented in the medical record.